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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART II. ASIA AND OCEANIA

Section 5 - Hong Kong

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03243

II.5 HONG KONG

Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

1. The total number of Vietnamese asylum-seekers and refugees at 31 December 1993 stood at 31,097. This included almost 1,900 refugees, 28,900 rejected asylum-seekers and some 300 persons awaiting a status determination decision. During 1993, some 100 Vietnamese asylum-seekers arrived in Hong Kong. Also in 1993, there were 26 non-Indo-Chinese arrivals seeking asylum in Hong Kong, of whom five were recognized as refugees. Two remained in Hong Kong as of 31 December 1993.

2. The refugees are of both rural and urban backgrounds, and have for the most part received only primary education. Approximately 59 per cent are male and 41 per cent are female; 28 per cent are children below the age of 16. Asylum-seekers who have been determined not to be refugees are accommodated in a number of detention centres located in the urban areas of Hong Kong and the outlying islands. The Vietnamese refugees are accommodated at Pillar Point Camp, an open refugee centre, where refugees are permitted full freedom of movement and also enjoy the right to employment.

Major developments

3. In 1993, some 12,300 Vietnamese asylum-seekers voluntarily repatriated to Viet Nam. Of this total, 80 per cent returned to the north and the rest to the south and central areas of Viet Nam. Some 1,700 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong were resettled in Australia, Canada, Denmark, United Kingdom, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America. Nine persons were settled locally.

4. Within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA), the refugee status determination procedure continued to be implemented in 1993. The first instance status determination was completed by the end of April 1994, and all appeal cases are expected to have been reviewed by the end of 1994. In 1993, a total of some 913 Vietnamese received positive decisions in the first instance, some 523 received a positive decision at the appeal stage, and 288 received positive decisions under UNHCR's Mandate. In 1993, the Special Committee for Vulnerable Persons (SCVP) made 28 recommendations for resettlement, and 841 recommendations were made for return to Viet Nam.

5. A region-wide decision to reduce the reintegration package for returnees was introduced in July 1993 and, as of 31 December 1993, more than two thirds of the screened-out Vietnamese cases fell under this category.

6. To facilitate the implementation of the SCVP recommendations to repatriate vulnerable persons - mainly unaccompanied minors - who do not volunteer to return, a Family Reunion Programme (FRP) was introduced in June 1993 and 30 persons returned to Viet Nam under this programme.

7. In 1993, a total of some 450 persons returned to Viet Nam under the Hong Kong Government's Orderly Repatriation Programme (ORP).

Programme objectives and priorities

8. Within the framework of the CPA, the main objectives of the assistance programme in 1994 and 1995 will continue to be the provision of care and maintenance through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to Vietnamese refugees, asylum-seekers and persons determined not to be refugees.

9. Efforts will be made to complete the refugee eligibility determination of the CPA caseload by the end of 1994. Eligibility issues concerning the Cambodians, most of whom are of ethnic Chinese origin, are expected to be resolved by the end of 1994. The refugee status determination of 250 Vietnamese who claimed to have Taiwanese links is also expected to be completed in 1994.

10. In 1994 and 1995, special importance will be given to protection-related problems in the camps, especially in relation to those determined not to be refugees.

11. Voluntary repatriation campaigns will be intensified through regular counselling and information sessions in the detention centres and by using the mass media and press in Hong Kong and in Viet Nam. The results of the information campaigns will be evaluated and adjusted according to the progress and experience gained. Specialized information teams will continue to provide information on Viet Nam to the Vietnamese asylum seekers determined as not being refugees and to also encourage them to opt for voluntary repatriation.

12. Special attention will be given to durable solutions for minors through appropriate counselling and support services, including case management training of staff who work with minors and information campaigns. Counselling will be undertaken to encourage minors to return to their families in Viet Nam.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

13. As in previous years, in 1994 and 1995, UNHCR assistance activities in Hong Kong will continue to be implemented by the Hong Kong Government and several voluntary agencies.

14. The Hong Kong Government provides the land, infrastructure and management costs in detention centres, while UNHCR assumes the cost of care and maintenance as well as other services. UNHCR also assumes health care and management costs in Pillar Point Refugee Camp, in addition to costs for resettlement processing, medical care, education, employment counselling, food allowances and housing for unemployed refugees.

15. The main implementing partner is the Agency for Volunteer Service (AVS) which provides services of legal advice in the refugee status determination process and in education and social services. The other agencies are the Hong Kong Housing Services for Refugees Ltd. (HKHSR), Hong Kong Christian Aid to Refugees (HKCAR), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Save the Children Fund (SCF), Caritas, International Social Service (ISS), and the British Red Cross (BRC).

16. UNHCR in past years has not been able to raise sufficient funds for the care and maintenance programmme in Hong Kong. As of the end of 1993, the Hong Kong Government has therefore borne from its own funds an estimated total of some $ 110 million, for which it is asking to be reimbursed.

General Programmes

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

Care and maintenance

17. In 1993, care and maintenance assistance was provided to Vietnamese refugees in the form of medical care, domestic needs, education, employment counselling, food allowances for the needy and social services. As refugees enjoy the right to employment, they contributed to rent, food, as well as utility costs and made a token contribution to education. Care and maintenance assistance in the form of individual or family support was also provided to non-Indo-Chinese asylum seekers.

Resettlement

18. Counselling, documentation and processing of cases identified for resettlement was provided in 1993. During the year, a total of 937 Vietnamese refugees were transferred to the Regional Resettlement Transit Centre (RRTC) in the Philippines, for further resettlement processing. Some 2,900 Vietnamese from Hong Kong and RRTC were resettled in 1993, and it is expected that some 300 would be resettled in 1994.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

Care and maintenance

19. Assistance in the same form as in 1993 continues to be provided in 1994 to Vietnamese refugees including special assistance payments, medical care, social work services and education to a group of some 150 vulnerable refugees. The refugees continued to contribute to the rent, food, utility and education costs.

Resettlement

20. Counselling documentation and processing of cases identified for resettlement will be continued in 1994. Special attention will be given to vulnerable groups such as single women, family reunion cases and refugees with drug addiction problems and those with criminal records, who arrived both before and after the cut-off date.

(c) 1995 programme proposals

Care and maintenance

21. Programme proposals for 1995 are based on the expected completion of CPA activities by the end of 1995. The revised requirement for 1994 and proposed appropriation for 1995 are as follows (in US dollars):

Sector	Initial 1994	Revised 1994	Initial 1995
Food	868,745	744,640	744,640
Transport	28,563	23,950	23,950
Domestic needs	180,756	172,005	172,105
Water	71,405	58,686	58,686
Health	105,210	90,435	90,435
Shelter	145,703	124,630	124,630
Community services	62,135	54,384	54,384
Education	109,782	79,046	79,046
Income generation	56,755	51,200	51,200
Legal assistance	996	854	854
Agency op. support	49,250	25,970	25,970
Sub-total	1,679,300	1,425,800	1,425,900
Project Personnel	518,100	0	0
Programme delivery	0	1,017,700	945,700
Total	2,197,400	2,443,500	2,371,600

Resettlement

22. A total of some 200 refugees are expected to be resettled in 1995. Those cases who are not resettled and or who have been rejected for resettlement will be counselled for voluntary repatriation or, if feasible, for local settlement.

Special Programmes

Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese refugees (CPA)

Care and maintenance

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

23. The overall refugee and asylum seeker population in 1993 decreased by 31 per cent over the 1992 figure due to the voluntary repatriation of 12,300 Vietnamese asylum seekers and 1,700 persons who were resettled in third countries.

24. The UNHCR programme provided care and maintenance assistance, pending durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, to an average of 36,000 asylum seekers and to some 1,900 refugees. For asylum-seekers, assistance covered food, domestic needs, education, recreation, medical care, well-baby clinics and social services and some aspects of income generation and vocational training. For refugees, the majority of whom are engaged in gainful employment, UNHCR assistance was limited to education, social services, medical care and camp management. Further, refugees paid for their own food and domestic needs and contributed partially towards recurrent costs.

25. Activities related to the status determination of Vietnamese increased during 1993 owing to the availability of some 60 legal consultants. A total of 48,355 cases were reviewed, including 19,021 cases of appeals.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

26. As in 1993, care and maintenance assistance to Vietnamese asylum-seekers and persons determined not to be refugees will continue throughout 1994 to be funded from Special Programmes in the sectors of food, water, health, sanitation, shelter, domestic needs and education. The special needs of children and women have been considered under this assistance programme in the form of regular pre-natal examinations inside and outside the camps. Services are also provided to monitor children's health and supplementary feeding programmes.

27. Special emphasis in 1994 will be placed on the promotion of voluntary repatriation of those who have been determined not to be refugees. For this purpose, Information Centres in all Vietnamese detention centres and camps will be strengthened with adequate community facilities, information equipment and material on life in Viet Nam.

28. A reduction of the budget relating to eligibility determination is envisaged with the anticipated completion of status determination by the end of 1994. However, most of the savings under this sector are expected to be absorbed by an increase in durable solutions activities.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

29. In 1995, the caseload is expected to decrease owing to the anticipated completion of status determination and an increase in the number of departures. It is expected that the level of assistance in the latter part of 1994 and in early 1995 will be reviewed in the light of the progress achieved in implementing the voluntary repatriation programme and decisions taken by the fifth meeting of the Steering Committee of the CPA.

Repatriation

(a) **Variations of planned activities in 1993**

30. In 1993, a total of 12,300 Vietnamese asylum-seekers voluntarily repatriated to Viet Nam. The rate of departure in the first half of 1993 was low, with a monthly average of some 600 returnees. The repatriation rate increased noticeably to a monthly average of 1,450 from mid-year following intensive group and individual counselling, information campaigns and a region-wide reduction in the reintegration package. An amount of $ 1,493,816 was provided for the promotion and implementation of voluntary repatriation in 1993.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

31. In the first two months of 1994, the number of voluntary repatriation departures met the expected average. It should be noted that with a diminishing pool of voluntary repatriation applicants compounded by the dissuasive impact of a high ratio of persons who are unwilling to return, the target of 14,000 persons to

be repatriated may not be achieved. Further efforts in counselling and information dissemination through innovative schemes and measures to promote voluntary repatriation will be undertaken. An amount of $ 1,645,431 has been budgeted for 1994.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

32. The voluntary repatriation campaigns will be intensified through more intensive counselling and dissemination of information in the detention centres by using the media and the press in the territory and also in Viet Nam. Information dissemination campaigns will be constantly examined and readjusted through careful monitoring, evaluation and experience gained. The concerns of overseas Vietnamese will be regularly and systematically addressed through open and factual dialogue. Priority and special attention will continue to be given to minors through appropriate counselling and support services. An amount of $ 1,878,500 has been budgeted for voluntary repatriation activities in 1995.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

33. In 1993, total expenditure was lower than expected, except under salaries due to an increase in local salary scales, effective 1 July 1993. Expenditures under common staff costs were lower, since these were budgeted at a standard rate which was higher than actual expenditures. Non-staff costs for travel on official business was lower than expected due the reduction in the number of planned missions. Expenditures under general operating expenses were also lower than budgeted since certain planned alterations to office premises were deferred to 1994. Consequently, the purchase of new office furniture was also not undertaken in 1993.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

34. The revised 1994 requirements have been increased, particularly under staff costs to take account of the increase in local salaries scales. In addition, one post of Eligibility Officer was extended until 31 December 1994 and two posts of Field Officer and Eligibility Officer repectively were extended until 30 June 1995, while one post of Senior Programme Officer was discontinued as of 31 March 1994. Non-staff costs have increased. Extra-regional travel costs are expected to be higher with more frequent missions to Vietnam taking place. Costs under general operating expenses are lower, since only minor alterations to the office premises are now planned in 1994. Furthermore, costs for maintenance of the premises is expected to be lower. Previously planned purchases of various new furniture and equipment have been cancelled, and only some small furniture purchases are planned in 1994.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

35. The initial 1995 estimate is lower, particularly under staff costs, with the planned discontinuation of the post of Senior Eligibility Officer and one Eligibility Officer as of 31 December 1994. Furthermore, the posts of one Field Officer and a second Eligibility Officer will be discontinued as of 30 June 1995. All other time limited posts have been extended up to 31 December 1995. Non-staff costs are maintained at the revised 1994 level.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN HONG KONG

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
2,991.5	2,197.4	1,425.8	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	1,425.9
0.3 a/	–	–	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	–
723.1	254.5	280.5	RESETTLEMENT	199.5
–	–	1,017.7	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	945.7
3,714.9	**2,451.9**	**2,724.0**	**SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS**	2,571.1
656.8	586.1	321.1	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	319.8
4,371.7	**3,038.0**	**3,045.1**	**T O T A L (1)**	**2,890.9**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
13,162.3	26,057.2	24,462.8	COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION	16,778.9
–	–	969.1	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	558.4
–	–	146.0	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	146.8
13,162.3	**26,057.2**	**25,577.9**	**T O T A L (2)**	**17,484.1**
17,534.0	**29,095.2**	**28,623.0**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**20,375.0**

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation